

Pauline Christianity, What is it?

Pauline Christianity is a term applied to what some perceive as the religious teaching unique to Paul's writings and distinct from the gospel of Jesus. That is, Jesus taught one thing, and Paul taught something completely different. Those who believe in a separate Pauline Christianity believe that the Christianity of today has little to do with Jesus' teachings; rather, it is the product of Paul's corruption of those teachings.

Some believe that the New Testament is a unified whole: that the Gospels present the life and work of Jesus the Messiah; the Epistles explain the meaning and scope of Jesus' work and apply it to daily living. For example, Matthew 28 narrates the fact of Jesus' resurrection, and 1 Corinthians 15 explains the significance of His resurrection. Mark 15:38 tells of the temple veil being torn in two when Jesus died; Hebrews 10:11-23 reveals the import of that event.

However, those who believe in a separate "Pauline Christianity" tell a different story:

Jesus, a great teacher, considered himself to be the long-awaited Messiah for the Israelites. He believed that God would overthrow Rome and bring His kingdom to earth. In preparation for this, Jesus taught a message of unconditional love, tolerance, and non-judgmental acceptance of everyone. Alas, Jesus' mission of inaugurating a new earthly age failed when the Romans crucified him.

Jesus' followers, believing that God had raised their rabbi from the dead, continued to meet in Jerusalem under the leadership of James, Jesus' brother. Their intention was to await the still-coming kingdom and continue observing Jesus' brand of enlightened Judaism. But along came Saul of Tarsus, who faked a conversion in order to infiltrate the church. Peter and James and others who had actually known Jesus were suspicious of Saul, who had never met Jesus.

Then Saul, who started calling himself "Paul," had a stroke of genius. He artfully combined traditional Hebrew ideas with those of pagan Greek philosophy, creating a new religion that could appeal to both Israelites and Gentiles. He began preaching that Jesus was actually God, that Jesus' death was linked to the Israelite system of sacrifice, that one could be saved by simply believing, and that the Mosaic law was obsolete. Paul's zealous missionary activity and persuasive writings took his new "gospel" around the Roman Empire. The Jerusalem Church, including Peter and James, disowned Paul as a heretic and cult leader.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Israelite Church lost authority, but the Gentile Church founded by Paul increased its influence. One of Paul's fervent followers wrote the book of Acts, which gave Paul legendary status with its glowing portrayal of him as the hero of the church. Later, four unknown writers gathered scraps of information about Jesus and wrote books they called "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke," and "John"—but Paul's theology, already dominant in the church, tainted the writers' perspective. Thus, Paul's religion won out over Jesus' religion.

In short, Paul was a charlatan, an evangelical huckster who succeeded in twisting Jesus' message of love into something Jesus himself would never recognize. It was Paul, not Jesus, who

originated the “Christianity” of today.

Commonly, those who hold to the above also believe the following:

- 1) Jesus was not divine. He never claimed to be God (YHWH), and he never intended to start a new religion.
- 2) The Bible is not an inspired book and is riddled with contradictions. None of the Bible, except possibly the book of James, was written by anyone who knew Jesus. There are fragments of Jesus’ teachings in the Gospels, but it is difficult to discern what he really said, since all were written many years after the execution of Jesus.
- 3) Paul “conversion” was either a personal hallucinogenic experience or an outright fraud. His claims to be an apostle were attempts to further his own authority in the church.
- 4) Pauline theological “inventions” include a) the deity of Jesus; b) salvation by grace through faith; c) salvation through the blood of Jesus; d) the sinless nature of Jesus; e) the concept of original sin; and f) the Holy Spirit. None of these “new doctrines” were accepted by Jesus’ true followers.
- 5) The Gnostic Gospels are closer to the truth about Jesus than are the traditional four accepted Gospels of the Bible.

Those that deny the concept of “Pauline Christianity” represents a belief that not all written in the Bible is the inspired word of the Almighty, even though some of it could be when there is such a claim. They believe Jesus was a prophet to First Century Israel, he taught the coming/presence of the “Kingdom of Heaven” but they deny His divinity, and the idea of Jesus’ atonement, and the Trinity..

Some of this information comes from the website: Gotquestions.org/Pauline-Christianity.html

Note: This article is very close to the Beliefs about Paul by the Assembly of Yahweh, Cascade

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